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Ramos, Ousting Marcos Commanders, Begins Changes Sought by the U.S.

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MANILA, Feb. 28 — In one of his first acts as the new chief of the armed forces, Gen. Fidel V. Ramos has taken a step toward the military changes long sought by Reagan Administration critics of the former Marcos Government.

The general, who was field commander of the small force that sparked the nation to oust Ferdinand E. Marcos, sent a message to the troops announcing that he was demoting some of the strongest Marcos supporters among command officers.

Among the first to ascend in the post-Marcos command are some of the field officers who defected with their troops to his side early, when the risk of a pro-Marcos attack seemed greatest.

Signaling the change was the choice of Brig. Gen. Ramon J. Farolan as chief of the air force. This reflected the fact that among the first to change sides were air force pilots who landed by helicopter gunships at the camp of General Ramos and Juan Ponce Enrile, the Marcos official who began the resistance Saturday and has become the new Government's Minister of Defense, his former post.

Is a Cousin of Marcos

General Farolan is a cousin of Mr. Marcos with a reputation for integrity, according to knowledgeable officials in the Aquino administration. He replaced Maj. Gen. Vicente M. Piccio Jr., who was closely identified with Gen. Fabian C. Ver, the former chief of armed forces who fled into exile with Mr. Marcos.

General Farolan provided something of a rallying point for reformist officers when General Ver was indicted after the assassination of Benigno S. Aquino Jr. in 1983. Later acquitted, General Ver was defended in a letter signed by the high command, but General Farolan did not sign it and publicly objected when his name was nevertheless affixed.

Other major appointments were Comdr. Serapio C. Martillano as chief of the Navy, replacing Rear Adm. Brilante C. Ochoco, who was promoted to the job after being among the first to defend General Ver in the assassination controversy.

The basic complaint from Pentagon experts is that the efficiency of the 200,000 members of the Philippine military badly eroded under Mr. Marcos because of political corruption and favoritism.

The major result, the analysts say, is a weakening of the ability to combat the Communist insurgency, which had grown in recent years under the Marcos Government's preoccupation with muting political opposition.

Officials said General Ramos already had military changes prepared in December when Mr. Marcos, again under American pressure, ordered such plans, which he never enacted.

'Overstaying' Generals at Target

President Corazon C. Aquino promised in her campaign against Mr. Marcos that she would force the retirement of "overstaying" generals, about 30 retirement-age officers whose careers were extended by Mr. Marcos as a way of rooting their loyalty in the presidential palace.

General Ramos, himself one of the extended generals, made no immediate announcement about this, but he is known to feel that the practice corrupts professionalism and retards the careers of younger, more professional officers who have quietly rallied around him in recent years.

In making the appointments, General Ramos ordered the "highest standards of conduct and discipline" from the military. He vowed to improve its credibility with the public, upgrade operational effectiveness and tighten the lax discipline that was in effect displayed in the rebellion, where General Ver was unable to get various units to carry out orders to attack the Ramos camp.

In his new order, General Ramos assumed chairmanship of the armed forces Savings and Loan Association, an institution that became a symbol of military corruption.

Through the Ver years, General Ramos, a West Point graduate known as a professional, had been kept as second in command, and Mr. Marcos kept promising he would eventually assume the chief spot. This was considered a public relations ploy in response to Administration pressures to remove Gen-

eral Ver and begin improving the military.

In fact, General Ramos lost power in recent years as General Ver altered the lines of authority to bypass the Philippine Constabulary, commanded by General Ramos, so that he lost field command primacy to the presidential palace.

With Filipino military morale, equipment, leadership and training considered in bad repair, American military experts are likely to remain skeptical for a while, at least, about the chances of improving the armed forces. Filipino officers organized in discreet reform groups long had urged a less political system.

President Reagan indicated shortly before the election that peaceful and equitable election results would produce more American for the military and civilian sectors.

Military officials in the new Government feel that the majority of the military took a major step toward rehabilitation in choosing to defect last week-end or to resist orders to fight the civilian population's overwhelming desire to depose Mr. Marcos.

Large parts of the military had come to be feared by the public for purportedly serving as the private armies, in effect, of provincial political bosses who helped run Mr. Marcos's extensive patronage machine. The Aquino assassination marked the nadir of the military, as 25 members, plus one civilian, were indicted in an purported military conspiracy but then released in an acquittal widely doubted by the public.

'Image Has Been Refurbished'

"The image of the armed forces has been refurbished in the last 24 hours," Gen. Eduardo R. Ermita said on Tuesday when more and more officers led their troops to General Ramos's side. General Ermita was named chief of civil military operations.

Aides said General Ramos made a point to announce the appointments in his first busy work day despite having to deal with other urgent problems, including tracking military outposts last heard to be loyal to Mr. Marcos.

Other appointments he announced included Brig. Gen. Rodolfo Caneso as chief of the army, replacing Maj. Gen. Josephus Q. Ramas, commander of a tank unit that was moving on the Ramos camp when a large crowd of civilians stopped it with peaceful obstruction.

Also named were Brig. Gen. Meliton Goyena as chief of personnel, Col. Antonio Samonte as chief of intelligence, Col. Alexander Aguirre as chief of operations and Brig. Gen. Jacinto Galang as deputy chief of staff.